



Florida House of Representatives

Democratic Office

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DEMOCRATIC LEADER FRANKLIN SANDS SEEKS HALT TO HOUSE REPUBLICAN NEAR-SHORE OIL DRILLING PLAN *SANDS SAYS EARTH DAY IS RIGHT TIME TO APPROVE RENEWABLE ENERGY BILL*

TALLAHASSEE, FL --- Amid today's Earth Day celebrations, Florida House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands (D-Weston) called on House Republican leaders to take urgent action on important environmental legislation and to halt their controversial oil-drilling proposal.

"Earth Day is an opportunity for all citizens to reflect on our shared responsibility of being cautious stewards of Florida's precious natural resources," said Leader Sands. "To honor this occasion, it is appropriate for legislative leaders to announce their intention of approving much-needed environmental protections and to expand our state's opportunities to create a large-scale renewable energy market.

"Instead of allowing oil drilling closer to Florida's shores as House Republican leaders have proposed, Florida should be a leader in the production and use of renewable energy," added Leader Sands. "I am deeply concerned by House

Republican efforts to lift the state's decades-old ban on drilling, which could bring working oil rigs to within 3 miles of our shoreline in the Atlantic Ocean and 9 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Florida's economy relies heavily on beach-going tourists, and we cannot afford the inherent risks associated with this near-shore drilling proposal," said Sands. "There's not enough oil in this region worth the risk of deeply injuring our state's economy. We should consider that the state's Department of Environmental Protection issued a 2000 "Coastal and Oceans Report" that found tourists spent \$42 billion visiting Florida's beaches, bringing in roughly \$700 million that year in states sales tax revenue.

"Legislation sponsored by Representative Keith Fitzgerald, D-Sarasota, and supported by other House Democrats, would help our state create a robust and secure renewable energy market. It is appropriate that we don't waste the final crucial days of the 2009 legislation session without adequately discussing and approving House Bill 1317, which creates the Florida Renewable Energy Freedom Act.

"House Bill 1317 would put Florida in a position to be a national leader in the production and use of renewable energy. This legislation would be good for Florida's economy, our environment, and provides the appropriate incentive to encourage homeowners and small businesses to invest in renewable energy, including solar and power, that would reduce our dependence on oil."

Earlier today, Leader Sands joined Governor Charlie Crist and other state officials and area children at a Florida Capitol commemoration of the 39th celebration of Earth Day. The first official Earth Day was held in 1970.

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